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VACA VALLEY RADIO CLUB

VACAVILLE, CALIFORNIA

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November 2011

Acting President's Message

By Marcus Maclean, KI6WDX

Brrrrr, CQ, Brrrrr, CQ, Brrrrr, CQ!!!!

What a difference in the outside weather, do you think? I used to live in the Midwest and had to deal with the constant weather changes and it seems that it is just as screwy out here in the sunshine state as it was there!

How did everybody do with the 10 meter band being as wide open as it was? Were any of you able to work those far away contacts with the success of the wide open unrestrained 10 meter band gave promise to? I know our club member; Walter WB6JTJ was and still is having a great time working the 10 meter band. After his station was rebuilt by Jerry, KD6WKY and yours truly, Walter's first contact was with a ham down in Mexico near Guadalajara and his second was working the 15 meter band with a British ham who was out on the Christmas Island operating as T32C on a DXpedition. Walter got luck again and worked him on the 10 meter band a while later. Jerry KD6WKY will send off for Walter's first DX QSL card.

Walter WB6JTJ has a fully functional station that includes his Kenwood dual band TM-V71A radio. So if you're on either the VHF or UHF bands or you're looking for the other end of your CQ call sometime, give him a call using the VVRC repeaters or the 10, 15 & 20 meter bands! Thus far, his "new" station using his V71A radio is giving him the ability to make contacts as far north as Yuba City, east to Cameron Park and down into the greater SF Bay Area region!!! His contacts with his Kenwood HF radio have been equally successful, too!

I want to extend hardy congratulations to Lauren, K6LIV for her first time on the air being the Net Control operator for our Tuesday night net. She did a great job in so much so that it's a possibility of her being asked to possibly take on one of the operator. We'll see what mom and dad think about that first.

In other matters, the ARRL Pacific Division will be meeting in early December over in Livermore and it has been brought to my attention that attending this event has not be done with consistency. As your elected club vice-president, I for one would like to carpool with another club officer to this meeting so that our club is represented.

As you know, the Merriment On Main event is slated for Tuesday, November 29 and I hope that those club members wishing to volunteer for this yearly event have already turned in their forms and picture ID copy to Ms. Gunter at the VVPD so that there isn't any unnecessary delays in obtaining the new VVPD issued ID badges for those participating club members. It was brought to my attention that the VVPD is allowing between a 14-30 day time frame in which to clear someone for their ID badge. The Vacaville downtown event will be upon us soon and for all of those volunteering club members, let's help to once again work together with the event sponsors, the City of Vacaville and the VVPD for a safe family oriented event!

Of the December holiday party event, has everyone made sure to visit our club's website and take a look at the invitation sheet about it? And of those who are planning on attending, how about a nice door prize that isn't that expensive (no bubble gum or baseball trading cards or the like will be accepted!), but is a little something that any ham could use? After next month and the holiday dinner event, there will be a guest speaker for the first meeting of the New Year. The subject will an interesting one and one that I myself have not heard much about except at this year's Pacificon that was held in Santa Clara Marriott Hotel.

I hope see everyone at our November club meeting! 73!

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October Club Meeting Minutes

The meeting was called to order at 7:07 PM by our acting president Marcus Maclean KI6WDX. There was no financial report available at the time of the board meeting. The September meeting minutes were approved as submitted.

Old Business: There was no old business.

New Business: Merriment on Main organizers now require all volunteers including our club have a back ground check completed prior to the event. Details on how to complete this back ground check were discussed. An email to the membership

with the form to complete was sent after the meeting.

Nominations for 2012 officers are as follows:

President – Marcus Maclean KI6WDX
VP – Chris Jones KD7TQO
Secretary – Jerry Olive KD6WKY
Treasurer – Bob Hewitt K6HEW
Director – Richard Craig KJ6MIB
Director - Skip Lawson, AF6HC
Director - Antonio Del Rio, N6ZGB
Director - Tom Christman KE6MDM

The Holiday Party/Meeting will be held in place of our club meeting at King's Buffett. Bob K6HEW said he's call them to set it up.

We had a nice discussion of amateur radio related topics including the working being done over at WB6JTJ Walter Hampton's QTH.

The general meeting was adjourned at 9:00 PM.

Around the Shack

By Jerry Olive, KD6WKY

After several years on the air as part of a remodeling project on the interior of our house, I disassembled my entire radio station, boxed it up and put it away for awhile. We right in the middle of resurfacing the interior of our house from ceiling to walls to the floor…everything. The popcorn had to go! The only way to do that is to move everything out to gain access to the surface we wanted to redo.

I waited until after we returned from Las Vegas for a company convention and until after the Caifornia QSO Party which I operated from home this year after several years running as a County Expedition. The sacrifice comes in from tear down through reassembly and activation.

So far I have missed a couple of great DXpeditions in Africa that I know I could have worked with one hand tied behind my back and this weekend I completely missed the 2011 ARRL November Sweepstakes (CW) where I know I'd have scored tops in the Single Operator, Low Power category in the East Bay Section and maybe even the Pacific Division. I finished #1 in the SOLP category in 2010 for the Phone portion of the contest and have the wallpaper to prove it. Oh well, I'll be back next year with guns blazing! I might, if I'm lucky, be able to work the phone portion of this contest in a couple of weeks, but it's a long shot. My goal right now is to be back on the air for the ARRL 10 Meter Contest in December. I want to work all the Technicians that are new to contesting have some fun in my newly resurfaced and painted house. The living room where I have my radio station set up is now "Sparkling Sage" which is the Lowe's paint version of light green.

I spent several hours at Pacificon this year making the rounds among all the vendors and saying hello to several of my NCCC buddies. I got a few funny looks when I mentioned that I wouldn't be QRV this year for the November Sweepstakes. Contesters are serious people when it comes to that contest.

I stopped by the Buddipole booth hoping to purchase the variable adjustment knobs for my Buddipole at $45, but they didn't bring them to the convention. I can live without them until next year. I'm too cheap to pay the postage for something that I only use once or twice a year knowing these guys show up to Pacificon annually. I'll have to send them a reminder email next year prior to convention.

I picked up a couple of new maps from the Yaesu booth and thanked them for doing some serious printing of various maps and charts. Kenwood had a great set up again and Icom was very busy with their beautiful set up.

Although a bit further of a drive for us up here, I thought the venue was nice for a Pacific Division convention. Parking was free and not congested. The price of the ticket was higher, but that's understandable given the nice venue.

I accomplished my card checking mission at Pacificon too. I got several cards checked for and now have my 30 meter DXCC confirmed with 116 countries officially confirmed. I'm just waiting for the wallpaper now. I had one card rejected…a card from France…figures. The card checker couldn't determine if it read 30 meters or 20 meters. I know it was 30 meters because I checked my log thoroughly, but that doesn't matter if the card checker can't read the chicken scratch on the card. The lesson learned is never use a French QSL card when getting a card checker to sign off your cards.

December Meeting

Reservations have been made at the King's Buffet on Orange Drive in Vacaville for the annual Holiday Dinner/Club Meeting. Thanks to Bob Hewitt K6HEW for making the arrangements on behave of our club.

Start getting your ham radio related gift item ready for the gig.

VACA VALLEY RADIO CLUB—2011 ELECTED OFFICERS

President: Vacated
Vice President: Marcus Maclean, KI6WDX
Secretary: Jerry Olive, KD6WKY
Treasurer: Bob Hewitt, K6HEW

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Director: Skip Lawson, AF6HC
Director: Chris Jones, KD7TQO
Director: Antonio Del Rio, N6ZGB
Director: Tom Christman KE6MDM

APPOINTED POSITIONS

Net Control Chairperson: Marcus Maclean KI6WDX
Activities Chairperson: Board of Directors
Newsletter Editor: Jerry Olive, KD6WKY
Newsletter Publisher & Distributor: Bob Hewitt, K6HEW

VACA VALLEY RADIO CLUB LEDGER

Year 2011

MONTH	GEN-ERAL FUND	RE-PEATER FUND	PRIZE FUND	ARRL	PROJ. FUND	TOTAL FUNDS	TOTAL GEN/ RPTR
2010 END	1404.69	774.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2178.69	2178.69
JANUARY	1576.69	656.00	21.00	0.00	0.00	2253.69	2232.69
FEBRUARY	1616.88	676.00	35.00	0.00	0.00	2327.88	2292.88
MARCH	1636.74	764.00	57.00	0.00	0.00	2457.74	2400.74
APRIL	1550.96	764.00	57.00	0.00	0.00	2371.96	2314.96
MAY	1579.96	787.00	57.00	0.00	0.00	2423.96	2366.96
JUNE	1543.06	787.00	57.00	0.00	0.00	2387.06	2330.06
JULY	1543.06	787.00	57.00	0.00	0.00	2387.06	2330.06
AUGUST	1533.64	797.00	57.00	0.00	0.00	2387.64	2330.64
SEPTEM-BER	1533.64	797.00	57.00	0.00	0.00	2387.64	2330.64
OCTOBER	1503.18	797.00	77.00	0.00	0.00	2377.18	2300.18
NOVEM-BER	1503.18	797.00	77.00	0.00	0.00	2377.18	2300.18
DECEM-BER							
2011 END	1503.18	797.00	77.00	0.00	0.00	2377.18	2300.18

THE VVRC WELCOMES YOU

The Vaca Valley Radio Club has proudly served the Northern Solano County Area since 1988. We pride ourselves in providing a friendly place for radio amateurs to meet and improve their operating skills.

We participate in public service events throughout the year and are always ready to assist with communications during times of emergency.

Browse our website for more information about our club. If you have any questions please email us at w6vvr@vacavalleyradio.net or call 707-448-5665 for assistance.

The Repeater is Published by the Vaca Valley Radio Club, PO Box 143, Elmira, CA 95625-0143, An ARRL Affiliated Club. Founded 1987, Chartered 1988 General Meetings: 2nd Wednesday of each month at 7:30 PM 420 Vine Street Fire Station.

Wheelchair accessible

Visit the Repeater online courtesy of Bob K6HEW at: http://vacavalleyradio.net

Club repeater in Vacaville:W6VVR 145.470 MHz(-) pl 127.3
The W6VVR net call is Tuesday evenings at 8pm on the club repeater. All are invited to participate in this weekly meeting on the air. 73!

Additional local repeaters
WV6F 224.200(-)

Breaking the Amateur Radio Balloon Altitude Record

By Don Ferguson, KD6IRE

The challenges of pursuing and capturing the World Record for ARHAB, "Amateur Radio High Altitude Balloons."

Ron Meadows, K6RPT, has always had a fascination with flight and science. After seeing a PBS special, he became interested in high altitude ballooning and how it could be something he would enjoy doing himself. Ron is the owner of a professional pool and equipment maintenance company. His son, Lee Meadows, works with Ron to maintain a large number of pools in the San Jose, California area.

Ham radio gives Ron access to many technical contacts in the San Jose area and provides support for his balloon activities.

On September 12, 2009 Ron, with support of his son Lee and Ron's father, Frank, KA6TVU, launched the first of what would become many balloons. This one carried a payload containing a camera, a simplex repeater and an APRS tracking GPS and radio. This project was named CNSP-01, for "California Near Space Project." It is also the name of Ron's website and the large team of friends who support him and Lee.

The pictures returned were excellent and fueled the idea to do other similar projects. Here is a link to those first pictures: http://www.californianearspaceproject.com/photos.K6RPT-10.html.

After the success of this launch, Ron decided to repeat the process but add a crossband 2 m x 70 cm amateur repeater and get some more great pictures from Near Space. On March 27, 2010 this second balloon was another success that traveled to 100,442 feet AGL and provided a couple of hours of excellent radio contacts covering central California from Bakersfield to Chico. Again the pictures were beautiful with views from the Pacific Coast to the Sierras.

World Record Attempt

It was at this point that Ron decided to launch a world record altitude attempt. Ron and Lee made several attempts with different sized balloons, both helium and hydrogen, and each of these flights provided additional information on the effect of neck lift (the lift needed to carry the payload) to payload weight. Also, they were able to keep track of the effectiveness of different balloon size and manufacturers from 1500 to 3000 grams.

Other lessons learned are related to the fill process and how to eliminate the effect of the hose weight from the lift measurement. Ron constructed a balanced fill fixture that allows very accurate lift measurements while filling the balloon.

On some early flights radio performance was an issue due to traffic collisions and antenna effectiveness. The antenna was redesigned to a half-wave center-fed dipole and the TNC was reprogrammed to transmit every 31 seconds. The antenna design significantly increased the gain and signal strength and the RF field was measured before each flight. The TNC timing gives much better altitude resolution and eliminates recurring collisions with APRS stations transmitting at regular minute intervals. There is no receiver onboard to see if the frequency is clear before transmitting, so this timing causes each packet to occur at a one second time differential within the minute.

Other considerations include the size and number of batteries and the cold voltage performance of the battery. Ron measures the battery at subzero temperatures to ensure it will last longer than the expected flight and recovery.

Probably the most significant part of the prelaunch process is the calculation of initial fill/lift to successfully carry the payload to maximum altitude before bursting and without stalling at some altitude before bursting. For the October 23, 2011 record-breaking flight, Lee made all the decisions related to fill and led the team during the launch process. Ron and the team supported all his decisions and deserve significant credit for the success and the world record. CNSP-10 reached 136,545 feet, or 25.86 miles, AGL.

I know everyone on the team understands this accomplishment is a total team effort and all of the people involved in past flights have contributed to the team's success in achieving the ARHAB World Record. This includes all of the people who tracked and recovered earlier flights, specifically the Stratofox Team, to allow reuse of equipment and analysis of failures.

More flights are planned for different experiments so keep track by following the updates on the California Near Space Project web site, http://www.californianearspaceproject.com/.

FCC, FEMA, NOAA to Conduct First Nationwide Test of Emergency Alert System

The FCC, in coordination with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), will conduct the first nationwide test of the Emergency Alert System (EAS) at 2 PM EST (1900 UTC) Wednesday, November 9. According to FEMA, EAS participants -- broadcasters, satellite and digital radio and television providers, and cable and wireline video providers -- "provide a critical public service to the nation as the resilient backbone of alert and warning when all other means of communication are unavailable."

During the test -- which should last approximately three minutes -- listeners will hear a message indicating that "This is a test." Although the EAS test may resemble the periodic monthly EAS tests that most Americans are already familiar

with, there will be some differences in what viewers will see and hear. The audio message will be the same for all EAS participants.

"Due to limitations in the EAS, the video test message scroll may not be the same or indicate that 'This is a test,' FEMA advised on its **website**. "This is due to the use of the live EAN code -- the same code that would be used in an actual emergency. The text at the top of the television screen may indicate that an 'Emergency Action Notification has been issued.' This notification is used to disseminate a national alert and in this case, the test. In addition, the background image that appears on video screens during an alert may indicate that 'This is a test,' but in some instances there might not be an image at all."

According to the FCC, the Commission and FEMA plan to reach out to organizations representing people with hearing disabilities to prepare that community for the national test. In addition, FEMA and the FCC will work with EAS participants to explore whether there are solutions to address this limitation.

The test will last for approximately three minutes; however this may vary across the country. "While state and local EAS messages are limited to two minutes, there is no time limit for national EAS alerts," FEMA said. "To evaluate whether the system properly interprets the national message code in the national EAS test, the message duration must be longer than two minutes."

Although local and state components of the EAS are tested on a weekly and monthly basis, there has never been an end-to-end nationwide test of the system. We need to know that the system will work as intended should public safety officials ever need to send an alert or warning to a large region of the United States. Only a complete, top-down test of the EAS can provide an appropriate diagnosis of the system's performance.

The FCC explained that in order to minimize disruption and confusion during the EAS test, it is being conducted on November 9 "because this date is near the end of hurricane season and before the severe winter weather season begins. The 2 PM EST broadcast will minimize disruption during rush hours while ensuring that the test occurs during working hours across the country."

PLEASE RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP

VACA VALLEY RADIO CLUB, INC.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION / RENEWAL FORM

Please Print & Fill in Completely

Dues are delinquent January 1st

Name: _____ Call Sign_____
Street: _____
City: _____Zip: _____
Phone: (_____) _____-_____OK to Publish ?(_____)
License Class: _____ ARRL Member ?(_____)
E-Mail Address_____

FAMILY Member (Spouse or Children)

Name: _____ Call Sign_____
License Class: _____ARRL Member ?(_____)
Name: _____ Call Sign_____
License Class: _____ARRL Member ?(_____)
Name: _____ Call Sign_____
License Class: _____ARRL Member ?(_____)

MEMBER Dues ----------$20.00 _____
Each Family Member ---$ 2.00 _____
Student ----------$ 5.00 _____
Repeater/Autopatch donation--- _____
Call/Name badge ---------$10.00 _____
Optional ARRL membership
ARRL dues----------$37.00 _____
Senior is 65 yr or older with one time proof on age.

Total---------- _____
Paid by CASH: ____ Check #_____
DATE:_____

Mail to : Vaca Valley Radio Club, PO Box 143, Elmira, CA 95625-0143